

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-07 OMB-01 /073 W

-----130428Z 050027 /14

R 120841Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9646

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 7241

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, RP, XF

SUBJECT: MINDANAO DEVELOPMENTS

REF: MANILA 7000 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE, SENIOR PHILIPPINE MILITARY FIGURES HAVE EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT MINDANAO CEASEFIRE WILL HOLD AND THAT GOP WILL DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO MAKE SURE IT DOES. ROMULO AND PARTY REPORTEDLY RETURNING FROM JIDDA VIA ROME OVER WEEKEND AND WILL NOT VISIT TRIPOLI. MNLF IS APPARENTLY BIDDING ITS TIME IN JUSTIFIABLE HOPE OF FAVORABLE (I.E., ANTI-GOP) RESOLUTION AT ISLAMIC FOREIGN MINISTERS CONFERENCE IN TRIPOLI. END SUMMARY

2. PHILIPPINE ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL ESPINO
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TOLD VISITING CINCPAC MAY 12 THAT IN HIS OPINION MINDANAO CEASEFIRE WILL HOLD. HE SAID MNLF HAS BECOME "ACCUSTOMED TO PEACE" AND IS SHORT OF AMMUNITION AND HE KNEW FROM HIS OWN GUERRILLA DAYS WHAT THIS MEANT. WHEN ADMIRAL WEISNER ASKED IF HE TRUSTED QADHAFI, ESPINO REPLIED WITH FLAT "NO". HE SAID LIBYAN LEADER HAD CHARMED MRS. MARCOS BUT THEN NEGOTIATED IN BAD FAITH.

ESPINO SAID THAT DEFENSE UNDERSECY BARBERO HAD BEEN "DUPED" IN HIS INITIAL MISSION TO TRIPOLI AND WAS POLITICALLY LESS DEFT THAN LIBYANS. ESPINO SAID DESPITE CONTRARY ADVICE FROM SOME STAFF OFFICERS (HE NAMED BGEN MANIPULA) AFP HAD NO INTENTION OF REPEATING REQUESTS TO US FOR SOPHISTICATED WEAPONRY.

3. FOREIGN AFFAIRS UNDERSECY INGLES TOLD CHARGE THAT ROMULO AND PARTY WOULD RETURN FROM JIDDA VIA ROME OVER WEEKEND. THEY WOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO VISIT TRIPOLI HE SAID, BUT GOP IS FIELDING USUAL TEAM OF LOBBYISTS, HEADED BY ASST SEC FOR ISLAMIC AFFAIRS PANGANDAMAN, WHO WILL BE ON HAND FOR ISLAMIC FOREIGN MINISTERS' CONFERENCE.

4. IN WIDELY PUBLICIZED COMMENTS MAY 11, DEF UNDERSECY BARBERO SAID IMPASSE IN MINDANAO NEGOTIATIONS WOULD NOT IMPEDE CONTINUING SEARCH FOR PEACE. BARBERO CITED "POSITIVE" REACTION OF MNLF COMMANDERS TO PRESIDENT MARCOS APPEAL THAT THEY CONTINUE OBSERVING CEASEFIRE. HE WARNED GOVERNMENT PROVINCIAL MILITARY COMMANDERS TO MAINTAIN DISCIPLINE (THIS APPEAL REPEATED BY PC COMMANDER GENERAL RAMOS IN DIFFERENT SETTING) AND SAID PRESIDENT MARCOS HAD ORDERED PUNISHMENT OF MILITARY SUBORDINATES WHO VIOLATE TRUCE. "THERE SHALL BE NO PROVOCATION FROM THE MILITARY AND WE HAVE TO AVOID ANY ARMED ENCOUNTER," BARBERO SAID ACCORDING GOP NEWS AGENCY PNA. BARBERO CITED ROMULO/ENRILE/MENDOZA TRIP TO JAKARTA, KUALA LUMPUR AND JIDDA AS EVIDENCE OF CONTINUING SEARCH FOR DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION.

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5. IN SIGNIFICANT ASIDE BARBERO TOLD PRESS HE HAD CONFERRED IN COTABATO WITH REPS OF KUTAWATO (COTABATO) REVOLUTIONARY COMMAND OF MNLF WHO HAD ALLEGEDLY RECOMMENDED TO DEPARTING MNLF EMISSARY THUM MANJOORSA THAT HE CONVEY TO NUR MISUARI THEIR DESIRE THAT CEASEFIRE BE MAINTAINED.

6. BARBERO SAID THAT "PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT" CHAIRED BY LANA DEL SUR GOVERNOR ALI DIMAPORO WOULD TAKE OVER FUNCTIONS OF OLD "PEACE PANEL" HEADED BY PANGANDAMAN. (PEACE PANEL WAS PRIMARY GOVERNMENT MECHANISM FOR CONTACT WITH MUSLIM REBELS AND PSEUDO-REBELS, AND WAS LARGELY A PROPAGANDA OPERATION, AS IS THE NEW "PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT".)

7. IN CEBU, ACCORDING PRESS, PC ZONE III CDR GENERAL ESPINA WARNED THAT MNLF MIGHT STAGE SHOW OF FORCE ON EVE

OF ISLAMIC CONFERENCE, AS IT HAS DONE IN PAST YEARS.

8. COMMENT: VIEWED FROM MANILA PERSPECTIVE, THERE SEEMS
LITTLE DOUBT THAT MNLF IS BIDDING TIME IN JUSTIFIABLE HOPE
OF ACHIEVING STRONG ANTI-GOP RESOLUTION IN TRIPOLI.
GOVERNMENTS' OWN EXPRESSED DESIRE TO KEEP LID ON
IS UNDOUBTEDLY GENUINE, ALTHOUGH PROBLEM OF AFP
INDISCIPLINE REMAINS A FACTOR. ENDEMIC UNCERTAINTY
RE MINDANAO NOW BEING AGGRAVATED BY RUMORS PREVALENT
IN DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY THAT TRIPOLI CONFERENCE AY BE
POSTPONED DUE EGYPT-LIBYA CONFLICT.
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